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Compliments of J. J. Willett.

**ADDRESS**

... OF ...

**J. J. Willett,**

Before the Southern Society, of New York, at  
its Sixteenth Annual Dinner, February 22, 1902,  
in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, responding to  
the toast,

**“GEORGE WASHINGTON.”**

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Hon. H. C. Lodge.

PRESS  
G. H. NORWOOD,  
ANNISTON

*Mr. Toastmaster and Gentlemen of the Southern Society:*

In the early settlement of Texas while immigration was pouring in from the other States the first question which met a stranger after he had crossed the Sabine River was, "What did you do at home that you had to come here?" And not infrequently that stranger had left his home in the older States under circumstances alike embarrassing to him and his creditors, with the words G. t T. posted up on the door of his late abode, which was well understood to mean, Gone to Texas. I will not ask any of you tonight "What did you do that you had to come to New York, or if you left G. t N. Y. on the door of your home in the South?" Such questions might call for explanations, which are always embarrassing, and particularly so upon occasions of this kind. Mr. Dooley has said the reason why reform is so difficult in New York City is, that it is full of men who have been chased here by the Sheriffs from the four corners of the land. This may explain some of the difficulties which beset your Mayor and District Attorney, but I am sure this does not explain why the Southern Society is increasing in such numbers or why it is in such a flourishing condition as to membership and social graces.

My pleasure in being with you tonight is great, but the greatness of my subject rather overwhelms me. There are times when even hardihood is virtue and to such virtue alone do I lay claim this evening in venturing to address you on the subject assigned me.

The story of Washington, however, will never grow old, or cease to be interesting. While he was

living in retirement at Mt. Vernon after his terms as President had expired, Bonaparte, who was just entering upon his meteoric career, upon being presented to our Minister in Paris, asked, "How is your distinguished countryman, General Washington?" Upon being informed that he was well, replied, "Yes, and it will always be well with him, for Washington's fame will be secure when my name shall have been forgotten." The most durable monument may perish but neither the forces of nature nor any crime of men can ever mar or mutilate a great example of public and private virtue. As Bancroft has well said, "But for Washington, the Country could not have achieved its Independence, but for him it could not have formed its Union, and but for him it could not have set the Federal Government in successful motion." What can I say, what can any man say of him which has not been already rendered as familiar as household words, not only here, but throughout the civilized world? How can I add anything to what has been said by Guizot, John Marshall, Jared Sparks, Edward Everett, Washington Irving, Bancroft and Lodge? While Washington was a true type of the South, his fame does not belong to her alone, nor does she so claim him. His part and her part in the Revolution would have been of no avail but for what was so gloriously done in council and in arms by brothers in the Middle and New England Colonies. Nor does his fame belong to any nation or any age. Wherever human beings throughout the world have erected an altar, and set up a Government dedicated to liberty, regulated by law, these may claim Washington for their countryman. The majestic story of that life, whether told in the pages of history or in the verse of Lowell and Byron, never grows old and will never cease to claim the attention of the sons of men.

While I may not say anything new and interesting on the subject of Washington, perhaps I may in bringing you a message from your ancestral homes say something of that portion of the Union wherein the bones of your ancestors are buried and

in which you first saw the light, which may not be altogether without interest to you. Glorious Southland! thou art still true to thy inherited valor, and incomparable graces. Neither the corroding marks of time, poverty or commercialism have taken away from thee aught of thy sweet gentleness, thy heroic and uncomplaining fortitude, or patient energy. Like Washington you have passed through deep waters and have had your Valley Forges, Brandywines, Monmouths, and Germantowns, but like him you have exhibited a loyalty and constancy to high ideals which no reverse, no hardship, no incompetency, no treachery, could shake or overcome. The honor and courage of your sons on hundreds of battle fields and the virtue and gentleness of your women, virtues preservative of all other virtues, have won the admiration of the world, and sheden imperishable lustre on thy fair name. "The past ~~is~~ at least is secure."

John Milton has well said, "War has made many great whom peace makes small." But we can say of the South as Milton said of Cromwell, while she showed herself great in war, peace hath made her greater, or more correctly speaking, that both war and peace alike gave opportunity for the display of those incomparable innate qualities which no more fortuitous circumstances could create or destroy; and if, as Emerson has said, "We are but quotations from our ancestors," does not the germ of that love of home and State, and that deathless devotion to conscience and principle, and to the right of self determination of what is principle create a better citizenship, and a greater security for our common country against gusts of passion which may sometimes sweep over our land from the homeless? The nature of everything is best seen in its smallest portions, hence we must seek the nature of the Republic first in the family and then in the State, wherefore it may be said that each citizen is an incarnate Republic, and that Republic is safe whose corner stone is the love of home and kindred.

The South has played no small part in the formation and settlement of our great country, whether

in furnishing leaders or acquiring or settling territory. A writer in the Century has recently demonstrated what was well known to many before, that in the settlement of this country civilization followed the water courses and that the great West is the true daughter of the South. It is well known that the vast domain known as the Louisiana Purchase, and all of the other country which has been added to the original thirteen states, making it extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific, were acquired through the influence of Southern leaders who were then in control at Washington. True, some territory has been recently acquired, which we of the South do not claim the credit for, and which time alone can tell whether or not it is a credit or debit. The great majority of the people of the United States in their knowledge of and attitude to our foreign possessions are very much in the position of a Confederate Soldier in the Civil War who was captured by the Federals. One of the Union Soldiers asked him, what he was fighting for. He replied, "Squatter Sovereignty," "What in the hell is that?" asked the Union Soldier, "Damned if I know," replied the Confederate, "but its ours, we paid for it and intend to keep it." We have taken the Philippine Bull by the horns, but the thought sometimes occurs whether or not it were better if we had taken him by the tail instead, since we could hold on by the tail just as well and let go a great deal easier.

But I hear someone say "What of the future of the South?" The primal law of existence is work. Like a crew capsized in water, people must either struggle or sink. None appreciated these truths more than the Southern people, and they had not been true descendants of the brave and gay-hearted cavaliers had they been appalled or discouraged at their great poverty and the disasters resulting from the Civil War. Nor were they so. A generous foe, recognizing the fight, had been fought to a complete finish and admiring the valor of his late adversary has assisted with capital and encouraging friendship to repair the ravages created by the War, and

behold a transformation which reads like a fairy tale. While many things were done after the Civil War which were simply horrible yet all things considered probably the world does not contain such another instance of magnanimity on the part of conqueror, and ability of the conquered in such a short interval, to repair not only the waste places but to compete with the other in the march of industrial progress. It is an object lesson which the other great nations may study with profit, and never ending interest.

The Director of the last census has just issued a statement showing that for the past decade the South kept pace with the West and North in increase of population, and the significant feature of it is, that while the increase in the West and North was almost wholly in the cities, in the South the increase was overwhelmingly in the country and small towns. This is a healthful, hopeful sign. It shows that "there is life in the old land yet," and that the love of homes and landed estates is still an instinct of the descendants of the cavaliers as it was in Washington's time. No country can be near to decaying which shows that the forests are being felled and fertile farms being cleared to make way for homes and profitable agriculture. Nor has manufacturing been neglected; on the contrary the development now going on in the cotton and iron industries of the South is a revelation to the world, and it bids fair to surpass the industrial development of the West in the years succeeding our Civil War. Industries are springing up on all sides, and are paying dividends which would surprise the business world if they were made public. For years it was said the Southerner had a genius for politics but no aptitude for business. What an egregious mistake! The brains of the South which was once through self defense in politics trying to preserve its vested interests and the *status quo* are now engaged in business. They are building railroads, cotton factories, iron industries, and all other kinds of manufacturing establishments. The South, in complete control of its own affairs at home, is not much disturbed as to who is in control of affairs at Wash-

ington, although as the wife of Louis XV once remarked, "An old coachman does like to hear his whip crack occasionally." Genius is but faculty intensified, or as Dr. Johnson said, great general powers of mind capable of being turned any way. Can it be doubted that the same intellectual forces in the South which controlled the policies and destinies of this whole nation for the sixty years preceding the Civil War when now devoted to commerce and manufacturing will not be able to meet competitors when nature has given them the advantage of soil, climate, and cheaper labor and cheaper raw material? He must needs be very rich or very reckless who invests his money solely upon the idea they cannot, and regardless of all natural advantages.

I would not have you think however, that these great strides in manufacturing in the South have been without effort, or that hers has been a "primrose path of dalliance,"—on the contrary she has been making a fight for the last thirty-five years which required more courage, fortitude and patience than it did to carry on the four years Civil War. She, without experience or adequate capital and beset with race troubles on every side, wherein the greatest kindness was noninterference, almost overwhelmed with an ignorant electorate, and no provision made for its education by the power which forced it upon her, has met the fiercest competition which brains and money could supply, and like all great and lasting achievements in the business world they have been accomplished by strenuous and unremitting efforts and by fighting over every inch of the ground. *Hic labor, hoc opus est.* A less brave or less cheerful people would have given up in sheer despair, and the fact that they did not, has justified the faith and kindness of their friends, and has shown that they are well worthy to be called by that name of which we are all so proud,—that of Americans.

When the South first commenced to manufacture iron, it was confidently asserted by her competitors that while Southern iron might be made

cheaply, it was of an inferior quality and fit only for cheap castings, but when the Southerner commenced to ship and sell his iron in Pittsburg, Cincinnati and Philadelphia, and when the English and German manufacturer began to actually prefer the Southern over the Pennsylvania and Ohio iron, that misrepresentation died and was gathered unto its fathers. Then it was said the future of iron was steel, and steel could not be successfully made out of the Southern iron for the reason that the cost of eliminating the objectionable properties in the ores, and reducing the same to steel, would be more than the steel would bring in the market. The enormous steel industries now in successful operation in the South disproved this assertion, and so it died and was gathered unto its fathers. Then it was asserted that the Southern iron man paid so much higher rate for money than his Northern competitor that the advantages of his location and cheapness of his raw materials were neutralized by his lack of capital and the high rate he had to pay for money. The successful reorganization of Southern Iron Companies, giving them an abundance of working capital at a low rate of interest, demonstrated that capital, with its keen instinct for profit, had unbounded confidence in the future of iron in the South and was desirous of developing and utilizing its great natural resources to the mutual advantage of both lender and borrower, and so this last misrepresentation died and was gathered unto its fathers.

The development in the mining of coal has kept steady pace with the manufacture of iron, and, if anything, has exceeded it, while as to the lumber business it is generally admitted there are no timber forests of any consequence now standing available for manufacturers this side of the Pacific slope except in the South. As to the oil business, I guess you know something about that up here.

The development of cotton manufacturing in the South is even more remarkable than that of the iron and coal business. It is simply inconceivable, even to those among whom this development is taking place, and those who do not visit the South have

no idea of the wonderful transformation going on there. But a few years ago the South had but few cotton factories and their output was a negligible quantity. Today there is hardly a village but what has its one or more cotton factories, sometimes as many as ten or twelve. Today the South spins as many bales of cotton as New England, although it started in this business but yesterday. Who can doubt that the iron logic of events has decreed that in a few years practically the whole cotton crop will be spun into cloth in the South, thus increasing the value of that crop many fold, besides giving steady employment to hundreds of thousands of people? At the beginning of our cotton manufacturing it was said by our competitors that the South could never make a success of it for several reasons, one of which in chief was the lack of skilled or capable labor, but here again reasoning from false or mistakenly assumed premises produced false conclusions as in the iron business, for the wife and daughter of the so-called "Southern Cracker," who have afforded our New England Magazine writers such amusement, have proved to be the very best cotton mill laborers in the world—patient, careful, loyal and industrious, and without desire to organize labor Unions and demand unjust exactions from their employers. It is a poetic and refined justice that puts it in the power of the so-called "Crackers" to be chiefly instrumental, through their capability as cotton mill laborers, in transferring New England's great cotton industries to the South.

Then it was said that the South could never make the finer grades but must confine itself to the coarser cloths. Again we see a theory exploded and find the Dwight, Merrimac and other Northern mills duplicating their fine plants in the South, with new and improved machinery and manufacturing the finer grades of cloth; to all which we give a cordial welcome, and in several of the Scuthern States ten years exemption from all taxation.

You ask me the cause which produced these results? It is the old story of the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest. Did you ever see

a bee hive when the hive was full of honey? How lazily and slowly the bees go in and out. Did you ever see the same hive when it had been stripped of its honey? How unceasingly and industriously the bees work until it is full again. So it was with the South. Until the Civil War, slavery and agriculture were so profitable that nearly all the South's earnings were invested in slaves and land, while our minerals and other great natural resources remained undeveloped, but when by the fortunes of war our hive was stripped of its honey, and slavery was no longer possible or even desirable, it became necessary for us to develop what we had hitherto neglected, and we are merely applying the lessons we have learned from the bees.

The young men in the South today are not seeking to know what are the rights of the States as did their fathers or even what are their individual rights for they have been long since defined, but they are seeking to know what are their opportunities and how they can best improve them. To them it is of more consequence to know how to locate and mine iron and coal or how to construct and profitably operate a manufacturing establishment than to know the history or terms of the Wilmot Proviso or the Missouri Compromise. To them the building of the Nicaragua Canal, which would connect the two Oceans at our doors and make a Mediterranean of the Gulf of Mexico in its shipping and commerce, with its resultant advantages to our Gulf Ports and inland manufactories, is of vastly more importance than the Hampton Roads Conference or even than as to who was in command at Santiago. There is no part of this country which is living more in the future than the South and there is no part for which the future holds out greater promise of usefulness and development. We are looking confidently into the future, and it smilingly beckons us on.

But, gentlemen, the future, while full of promise, also holds great questions to be solved. The new century we have just entered upon contains within itself the problems of the future. What has been settled in the past century is scarcely now of more

than academic interest, and it is burning,—living issues which engage the greatest thoughts of mankind. As Americans we are no longer deeply interested in the rights of man in his individual capacity as a vital question. They have been so firmly established by our Federal and State Constitutions and by the hundreds of decisions of our highest Courts that no one now doubts or disputes them, nor have we the slightest idea of relinquishing anyone of them. It is natural however, that when a question is settled finally and conclusively it ceases to be absorbing. One of the great questions of living interest just now is the rights of property, and its right to contract—and over against this is the equally if not more important question of the rights of society or man in his collective capacity. To the solution of this great question, the South with its homogeneous and conservative yet progressive people can, must and will contribute its full share. Other questions will crowd upon us. How shall we without sacrificing our own race, discharge the full measure of our duty towards that unfortunate race who are in our midst without fault on their part, to whom this country has so long been a home, and who were falsely taught for so many years that they were wards of the Government? How shall the individual be preserved in the mass and be made to feel his responsibility for government and the duty of discharging public obligations? How shall corruption in private and public life be eradicated? These and similar questions must be answered and they will be by the countrymen of Washington, who whether in success or defeat have ever held to high ideals. And so as a nation we enter the new century in that spirit of optimism which is essential to progress and the natural result of trials and dangers successfully encountered and with self confidence arising from experience. Proud of the past and the achievements of our ancestors, yet looking not into the past but into the more glorious future, chanting not the Miserere, but the Te Deum, we proceed to take our place among the peoples of the earth and to fulfill a destiny vouchsafed to us by merit and by inheritance.







## **ADDRESS**

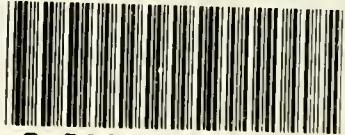
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### **J. J. Willett,**

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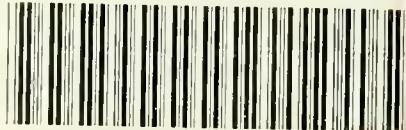
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